FACULTY & friends

Patricia Tao, piano

Friday, November 14, 2003 at 8:00 pm

Arts Building
University of Alberta

Program

DEPARTMENT OF
MUSIC

Program

Sonata in E-flat major, Op. 81a ("Les Adieux") — Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
- Das Lebewohl (Les Adieux): Adagio- Allegro
- Abwesenheit (L'absence): Andante expressivo
- Das Wiedersehen (Le retour): Vivacissimamente

Etude Fantasy (1976) — John Corigliano (b. 1938)
- Etude 1: For the Left Hand Alone
- Etude 2: Legato
- Etude 3: Fifths to Thirds
- Etude 4: Ornaments
- Etude 5: Melody

Intermission

From *Vingt Regards sur l'enfant Jésus* — Olivier Messiaen (1908-92)
- Le baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus

From *Années de Pèlerinage, troisième année* — Franz Liszt (1811-1886)
- Les Jeux d'eaux à la villa d'Este

Fantasy Pieces, Op. 116 — Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
- Capriccio in D Minor : Presto energico
- Intermezzo in A Minor : Andante
- Capriccio in G Minor : Allegro passionato
- Intermezzo in E Major : Adagio
- Intermezzo in E Minor : Andante con grazia ed intimissimo sentimento
- Intermezzo in E major : Andantino teneramente
- Capriccio in D Minor : Allegro agitato

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Program Notes

Ludwig van Beethoven
b. Bonn~ baptized 17 Dec 1770
d. Vienna~ 26 March 1827

Sonata in E flat Major, op. 81a ("Les Adieux")
Exceptional technical difficulty and prodigious richness of invention marks the Sonata in E flat, op. 81a. The work, programmatic in nature, resulted with the departure of Beethoven's patron Archduke Rudolph, forced to leave Vienna before the advance of the Napoleonic army in May of 1809. Entering the dates of the archduke's departure and return in the score, Beethoven allowed the emotional progression of "farewell-absence-reunion" to determine the basic character of the three movements.

Although largely known by its French title, it was the publisher who gave the sonata the programmatic title, "Sonate caractéristique: Les adieux, l'absence et retour," an annoyance to Beethoven, who had structured the piece around its German title. Defined by its programme, the work is clearly more illustrative than most of its companions.

It grows from a single theme—the fateful figure announced in the first measure, which constitutes the phonetic equivalent of the three syllables of Lebewohl(farewell). Making the programmatic association even more clear, Beethoven wrote the syllables below the three corresponding chords. The moving and deeply significant exordium of the introductory Adagio outlines this motive in the falling horn-like figure. After a moment of suspense, the Allegro is roughly launched with a rocky descent. The 'Lebewohl' motive serves in effect as a *cantus firmus*, not only pervading the opening Allegro but also serving as a structural device throughout the sonata. Underlined by constant interval of a second, the movement is tense in atmosphere, ending with softly overlapping 'Lebewohl' phrases.

Processional in character, 'Abwesenheit' (absence) recalls passages from C.P.E. Bach, for whom Beethoven had deep admiration. A consoling cantabile section in the major key offsets the pathos of restlessly shifting minor keys and destabilizes any expectations of introspection that could be associated with the movement. A sudden chord, serving as a veritable musical exclamation mark, launches the Finale, marking the moment of reunion.

Emerging in a rush of arpeggios, the finale, 'das Wiedersehn' (reunion), clearly celebrates the joyful feelings of being reunited. Transforming the 'Lebewohl' motif from the first movement into scintillating figuration, the finale not only embodies the outcome of the overall narrative progression of movements but also acts as a dramatic culmination of the entire work. Delaying the completion of the exuberant finale until the actual return of the Archduke, Beethoven had genuine cause for celebration and a reason to immortalize their friendship through a work of art.

John Corigliano
b. New York~ 16 February 1938

Étude Fantasy
Composed in 1976, the Étude Fantasy originated in Corigliano's curiosity about the music of some famous predecessors: why have composers traditionally favored the left hand? The result was a suite of etudes in the form of a fantasy in which Corigliano derives the music

"from the limits and possibilities of the left hand, later reworked to exploit other pianistic skills." Indeed the work is rich with formal unity while providing opportunity for dazzling display for the performer, who is faced with treacherous stretches of virtuosity.

Five intertwined etudes use the same material, as the interval of a second and its inversions and expansions are used both melodically and in building the work's harmonic structure. The first etude begins with a six-note row, which grows to a furious climax before finally yielding to the second etude—a study in legato playing. Simply entitled "Legato," it is dominated by melody, as melodic interest surfaces with the constant crossing of its contrapuntal lines cross, while both hands slowly move downward.

With his title "Fifths to Thirds," Corigliano describes the technique involved in the third etude, as relentless fifths and thirds are played by only two pairs of fingers. Through the virtuosity of crossed hands, the melody emerges in the top voices.

"Ornaments," is a study of just that as trills, grace notes, tremolos, glissandos, and roulades are added to the opening material of the first etude. Later developing into a frenetically charged *scherzando*, the first four notes seen in the third etude reappear as the left hand plays alternates with the right hand in what Corigliano describes as "rapid thrusts."

The final etude, a study in melody, requires the performer to isolate the melodic line amidst the surrounding filigree. The works ends quietly with the opening row, now heard in retrograde and further attended by a mournful two-note ostinato.

Olivier Messiaen
b. Avignon~10 Dec 1908
d. Paris~28 April 1992

"Le Baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus" from *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*
Composed for Yvonne Loriod, a gifted performer with prodigious technique, *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* (Twenty contemplations of the child Jesus) was premiered on 26 March 1945. The cycle of twenty pieces, taking over two hours to perform, is considered Messiaen's greatest work for piano and stands as one of the most challenging pieces in the keyboard repertoire.

As the title suggests, the cycle involves the contemplation of the baby Jesus by God the Father, the church, the Holy Spirit, the virgin, angels, wise men, and immaterial of symbolic entities including time, the star, the cross, and silence. Although Christian symbolism is of prime importance here and in other works written between 1928 and 1944, in Messiaen's view the work is theological rather than mystical.

"Le Baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus," (The kiss of child Jesus) the fifteenth piece in the cycle, is the most well known. It, like the whole cycle, is programmatic in nature. Messiaen provides this information about the movement: "at each communion, the child Jesus sleeps with us near the door; then he opens it onto the garden and throws himself into the light to kiss us." The development of this idea structures the piece in several sections.

Characterized by its slow and mysterious tone, 'theme of God' opens the piece, here treated as a berceuse and denoting the child Jesus sleeping. This theme is not only important to the structure of this movement, but is also one of three themes that recur throughout the whole cycle, thus providing unity to the entire work.

Increasingly ornamented garlands reminiscent of Chopin constitute the second section, 'le jardin' (the garden). 'Les bras tendus vers l'amour' (arms stretched out toward love) can be recognized by its quicker tempo and passionate tone. Building to an almost unbearable intensity, the fourth section marked "le baiser" (the kiss) is Messiaen's musical depiction of a picture of the "Christ-child leaving his mother's arms to embrace Sainte Thérèse of Lisieux." Returning to the style of Chopin, the 'theme of God' heard in the opening accompanies the final section, 'l'ombre du baiser' (shadow of the kiss).

Franz Liszt
b. Raiding, (Doborjan)~ 22 Oct 1811
d. Bayreuth~31 July 1886

"Les Jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este" from *Années de Pèlerinage, Book III*
While Liszt was undoubtedly the pre-eminent piano virtuoso of the Romantic, excelling in displays of pianistic brilliance as both a performer and composer, the piano works of his later years move away from the old pianistic glitter. Liszt was now writing for himself and no longer for the public. Composed between 1877-82, "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," one of seven pieces in Book III of *Années de Pèlerinage* (Years of Pilgrimage), reflects this shift in compositional style. The collection is part of the late piano works composed in the last fifteen years of Liszt's life when he had emerged from semi-retirement in Rome and was traveling extensively.

Symmetrical in construction, *Années de Pèlerinage* opens and closes with religious pieces. Two funeral movements that surround the central "Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este" further complete this symmetry. Translating the spectacular sight of the fountains at the Villa d'Este into music, "Les Jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este" (The Fountains at the Villa d'Este) is the best known piece in the collection.

Highly impressionistic in style, the work proved to be a model for later compositions such as Ravel's "Jeux d'eau" and Debussy's "L'Isle joyeuse." Rippling broken chords in sevenths and ninths, which open the work, evoke images of running water, while extended passages in tremolo chords convey a contrasting form of water movement.

Even with the evocation of water, Liszt does not neglect the religious element, by this time very important to the composer. Near the middle of the score, Liszt quotes in Latin, St. John's Gospel: "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." With these words, Liszt draws together the images of water and its symbolic impact within Christianity.

Brahms
b. Hamburg~ May 1833
d. Vienna~ 3 April 1897

Fantasias, op. 116
Composed between 1891 and 1892, the varied character of the seven pieces that comprise Brahms's op. 116 bear a deeply personal tone. Calling them 'lullabies of my grief,' they reflect the sorrow felt by Brahms, who had recently lost his sister as well as his close friend Elizabeth von Herzogenberg. Not surprisingly, then, the collection expresses deep sorrow and at times emotional intensity.

The set opens with a capriccio in D minor, whose relentless displacement of the strong accent to the third beat, gives an effect of breathlessness and defiance. The contrasting *pp* section alternates the second subject between the left and right hands while still maintaining the displaced accent. A return to the opening subject finishes the piece with the same defiance that was hurled upon the listener in the opening.

The intermezzo in A minor (no. 2) is peculiarly sad in its plaintive tone. Static in its approach, it does not display deep emotion in any traditional way: there are no displays of passion and a definitive climax is absent. Yet, it is intense with the sense of longing and a yearning for fulfillment created in its reserved approach.

Passionate in its youthful ardor, the capriccio in G minor (no. 3) at once arrests the attention, containing the breadth of the early sonatas. Energetic and bursting with the desire to move forward, it is better known than many of its companions.

Originally called a 'nocturne' by Brahms, the intermezzo in E major (no. 4) is surely one of the most peaceful of pieces. Improvisatory in style, the lovely, tender melody grows out of a simple triplet figure grows. A warmer melody rising out of the quiet of the *pp* section is further enriched by a left hand. New harmonic fullness in the recapitulation ends the piece in a dreamy haze.

The closing capriccio, also in D minor (no. 7), not only tonally closes the collection in the key in which it began, but also shares the agitation heard in the opening movement. The contrasting cantabile section, in A minor, marks a sudden shift in mood. It is a temporary respite, however, as the wildness of the opening returns in its original form further marked by the coda, which rapidly transforms the theme into swift pulsating chords that grow in excitement until their *fortissimo* goal in the tonic is finally realized.

Notes by Deanna Davis

Patricia Tao joined the U of A faculty in 2002. Performed for 10 years as pianist of the Guild Trio. Tours in Europe as "Artistic Ambassador" for the United States and throughout the U.S. for Columbia Artist's Community Concert series. Residencies at the Tanglewood Music Center and the University of Virginia. Live radio broadcasts on NPR's "Performance Today," WNYC's "Around New York," WQXR's "The Listening Room," and the St. Louis public television series "Premiere Performances." Commissions and premieres of new works by leading American composers, including William Bolcom, Harvey Sollberger, and Sheila Silver. Has recorded on the CRI label. Solo CD for Arktos to be released in fall, 2003.

Bachelor of Arts from Harvard University, Master of Music with Distinction from Indiana University, and Doctor of Musical Arts from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Principal teachers were Leonard Shure, Gyorgy Sebok, and Gilbert Kalish. Chamber music studies with Bernard Greenhouse, Leon Fleisher, Julius Levine and Timothy Eddy. Has also taught at Western Washington University and the University of Virginia.

Upcoming Events

November
15 Thursday, 10:00-12:00 noon
Violin Masterclass
with Visiting Artist **Corey Cerovcek**
Fine Arts Building 1-29
General admission: $15

16 Sunday, Concert I: 4:00 pm
Pre-concert talk at 3:00 pm
New Music Series
Molinari String Quartet and
Marie-Danielle Parent, soprano
Complete works for string quartet (eight)
by R Murray Schafer

16 Sunday, Concert II: 8:00 pm
Pre-concert talk at 7:00 pm
New Music Series
Molinari String Quartet and
Marie-Danielle Parent, soprano
Complete works for string quartet (eight)
by R Murray Schafer

17 Monday, 12:00 pm
Noon Hour Organ Recital
The recital presents a variety of organ repertoire played by students, faculty and guests of the University of Alberta.
Free admission

20 Thursday, 1:30-3:30 pm
Piano Masterclass
Visiting Artist **Jean-Paul Sévilla**
Studio 27, Fine Arts Building
Free admission

21 Friday, 8:00 pm
University of Alberta Opera Scenes
Alan Ord, Director
Works by Mozart, Donizetti, Bizet, Moore and Rossini

25 Tuesday, 8:00 pm
University Symphony Orchestra
Concerto Competition Finals
Free admission

26 Tuesday, 4:30 pm
Student Composers Concert
(Music 259)
Studio 27, Fine Arts Building
Free admission

26 Wednesday, 8:00 pm
The University of Alberta Symphonic Wind Ensemble
William H Street, Director

27 Thursday, 7:00 pm
University of Alberta
Jazz Choir: *Happnin'*
Liana Bob, Conductor
Education Building room 1-115

department of Music

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